CHRIST OUR LIFE

R. B. JONES

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BY
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To
L. AND C.

PREFACE

THE late Rev. R. B. Jones had intended to publish a volume of sermons which, he felt, best expressed what lay nearest his heart and uppermost in his mind. This task has been left to another. What have saved it from being melancholy are the knowledge of the blessedness of those that die in the Lord, and an imperishable affection for the one who speaks in these pages. Indeed, these have transformed even a happy *task* into something delightsome and recreative. May God bless these sermons is the prayer of those who send them out and, we may safely believe, of him whose entire soul went out in their proclamation. Thanks are due and heartily tendered to Messrs. Marshall, Morgan and Scott for their great kindness and help shown unfailingly at all stages, in the preparation of this volume.

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THE LIFE ROOT

"I am the True Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman."
JOHN XV. 1.

THE "I am" of our text is strangely stirring. Inevitably, memory reverts to an Old Testament scene where God commissions for special service the shepherd of Jethro's sheep: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exod. iii. 14). It is the voice of the invisible God of Israel announcing to His servant His Name for ever and His memorial to all generations. By this Name—Jehovah—He became known to His chosen people, and that Name was designed to be their perpetual satisfying inheritance.

When the New Testament is opened the wondrous Name is found carried over from the historic past, and uttered by the lips of one who is Man; the erstwhile Carpenter from Nazareth. Startling His hearers He declares, "*I am* the Way, the Truth, and the Life"; "*I am* the Resurrection and the Life"; "*I am* the Bread

of Life"; "*I am* the Light of the world"; "*I am* the Door"; "*I am* the Good Shepherd"; and here, "*I am* the True Vine." He also warns, "If ye believe not that *I am*, ye shall die in your sins." Such extraordinary language sounds as if it were but the articulation of the great Horeb revelation. That revelation left the "I am" largely general, vague, and indeterminate. Here it looks as if the details were being filled in; the sketch becomes a portrait. Here is indeed the Son revealing the Father, and Himself. The curtain is lifted and the world, at last, can fully know God. What Christ is, God is; for Christ is God. From no other lips could be tolerated the holy Name, "I AM."

It has just been intimated that Christ came to reveal the Father, and yet, strangely enough, the Father is mostly undetected by us in this text. So dazzled, perhaps, are our eyes with the glory of the declaration, "I am the True Vine," that we have hardly seen the added words, "and my Father is the Husbandman." From the obscurity drawn over this important declaration by our blindness let us for a moment endeavour to reclaim it. For whatever Christ is as the True Vine, He obviously would have the Father praised, for He is the Husbandman Who must be credited with the

planting, the nourishing, and the complete production of the True Vine. Our inattention must not stand between the Father and the glory the Son would give Him.

And thus, stirred up by the Spirit of God, let us, first, consider the remarkable words, "My Father is the Husbandman."

I

God, a Husbandman! "And Noah began to be an Husbandman, and he planted a vineyard" (Gen. ix. 20). May we not here dare to vary slightly these words and say, "And God began to be an Husbandman, and He planted a vineyard"? At least, no statement could be more true. Long before Noah planted his vineyard, God had planted His. He is the Prototype of every vine-planter.

God's vines are men. His vineyard is the earth.

And why does God interest Himself in His human vines? What seeks He as the result of His husbandman industry? Vineyards fulfil their end in—what? Vines in their green beauty; their tendrils insinuating themselves in every direction? Bulging bunches of berries blushing dark crimson and mantled in delicate

bloom? Nay; vineyards have an end other than these. See yonder winepress hewed out of solid rock. Into it, when harvest comes, the clusters of luscious beauty are careless thrown, heap upon heap. Then presently, with naked feet, into the filled winepress gaily jump the gatherers, and with ruthless tread crush the shapely clusters into shapeless, messy pulp, while the juicy liquor flows out into the receptacles placed to receive it. In that flowing stream of wine the planter sees the looked-for reward of his outlay in money and toil.

Recounting eloquently the miracle of God's sustaining providences the Psalmist sings, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth: and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread that strengtheneth man's heart" (Ps. civ. 14, 15). The blessings of Providence are themselves various, and differing also in the ends they serve. God treats men not as paupers; there is provided what some might deem luxury. For, in addition to bread for strength, there is also oil for a shining face, and—let this be specially marked—wine for gladness of heart! Thus does God in His designs abound toward men.

There is even "wine that maketh glad the heart of man." And it is thirst for this wine, this gladness, that has urged on all the Noahs who, beginning to be husbandmen, planted vineyards.

And what shall we say of the Divine Husbandman? Why is He interested in vines? Is there also a wine that maketh glad the heart of God? There is: and it is for the gladness that that wine gives that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has become a Husbandman.

II

The story of the labours of the Divine Husbandman is, largely, the story of the Bible. The planting of the first vineyard, so to speak, is the subject of the Bible's first chapters. What a vineyard! It took Omnipotence five days in its preparation, and then came the sixth day and the planting in it of the vine: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Here was the first vine; type of a species both heavenly and divine; the adaptation, so it would seem, of a tree that flourished in heavenly vineyards, to conditions terrestrial. From that Adam vine the Divine Husbandman (we can only speak as men) expected much. It

had all the favourable conditions a human vine could require. Fruit, rich and plentiful, could reasonably be expected from it. And the Husbandman anticipated the rich joy when, in visiting His vine, He could from laden branches gather a cluster, press it into His cup, and drink the wine that maketh glad the heart of God.

Alas! as we well know, God's rightful expectations from that vine were never realised. The man Adam was tempted, and fell. By Satanic craft the very nature of the vine was changed. It produced fruit, but it was wild grapes. So profuse was its growth that soon the whole earth was filled with its running tendrils, and the soil prepared for the wine that God desired monopolised by vines whose wine made glad the heart of God's enemy. Could matters have improved some sign of that would in time have appeared. But centuries of patient toleration at last conclusively showed that the condition was incurable. Then came judgment, terrible and complete. Every vine in the vineyard was uprooted and destroyed; all, that is, but one. That was the one that stood out among the rest: "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. . . . And Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

Given better conditions than it had already enjoyed, it shall be put to the proof whether this Noah vine is capable of improvement. Rid of the handicap of the crowding wild vines around, and, in a new dispensation, dealt with somewhat differently, it shall be seen whether this single spared vine can be rid of all its "wild" nature and yield God sweet wine for His cup.

It is a new beginning, and with it there is new expectation. Will the vineyard now prove successful? Will the damage done by the enemy be undone? Eagerly we peruse the story, and, alas, once more it is tragedy. Here is another fall. As Adam, so Noah. In the midst of his tent the favoured Patriarch is found drunk and humbled. Again it is sin, and sin with shame. The vine is bedraggled in the mire; filth added to acridity.

III

And yet, the story of the Husbandman's vineyard-keeping goes on.

A few centuries pass, and a new phase opens. This time the vineyard is planned on a much smaller scale. And so, once again, there is a new dispensation; this time, an elective one. Instead of a vineyard coterminous with the

globe, it is one limited by the boundaries of one land and nation. Isaiah records something of the planting of that vineyard, and of the result. We quote the beautiful words of Chapter v: "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching His vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and He fenced it, and gathered the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and He looked that it should bring forth grapes." Here, of course, is poetic imagery; but poetry whose meaning is as clear as if it were literal prose. The "very fruitful hill" is the "land flowing with milk and honey." "Gathering out the stones thereof" refers to the clearing of the land of the idolatrous Canaanites. The "built tower" is the Temple; the "winepress" the Temple altar.

"The choicest vine," doubtless, is Abraham; a wonderful tribute, let it be noted in passing, to that remarkable man; the most remarkable, in many ways, of all the Old Testament characters. And this is not the only arresting Bible description of Abraham. He is also honoured with such titles as, "The Father of us (believers) all"; "The Friend of God";

"The Heir of the world!" No other man is given such appellations. What a man he must have been! Not a public man—king, priest, prophet, military leader—as were most, if not all the other Old Testament figures, but a private individual taken out of the midst of prevailing polytheism and idolatry; trained in the paths of trust and obedience, and, at last, found to exemplify such faith in God as is eclipsed nowhere except in Christ Himself. Is it any wonder that this godly, spiritual Abraham is called "the choicest vine"? Nowhere else in all the earth could God find a vine of such promise, and which He could so desire to propagate, as in this unique man of faith.

From this Abraham then God will cause to spring the chosen people. He will plant His new vineyard with scions from this vine. Humanly, the new enterprise seems full of promise. All the conditions favourable to fruitfulness are there. If this new vineyard plan fails, it will be established beyond doubt that fallen human nature is hopelessly evil.

What marks of favour God showered upon Abraham's people! He taught them to walk, taking them by the arms. He established His own dwelling among them; protected them from their enemies; filled their barns; and

caused their wine- and oil-presses to overflow. He gave them His laws, and became Himself their King. Their "advantage" as one of their greatest sons admitted, was "much in every way." To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. To them also were committed the oracles of God. They were the only nation that had God and hope in the world.

It is from this highly favoured people that God now looks for fruit. The vineyard is cared for and well nourished. Nothing is spared in effort, oversight, nutrition, culture. But, soon, discouraging signs appear. Changing the metaphor, the joy of the nation's espousals is soon lost and forgotten. Wedded to Jehovah Israel is soon adulterously associated with Baal and other false deities. The Divine Husbandman comes to His Vineyard seeking fruit, but in vain. As Isaiah says, "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." And then follows the cry of the pained heart of God: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Wherefore,

when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes ? . . . For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry" (Isa. v. 2–7).

Thus, about half way in their national career is Israel's sad failure registered.

And still Divine patience is not exhausted. He will grant them opportunity to repent, and will test them still further. Then at last, the final crisis arrives. Into their midst comes their Messiah. Long-expected, their King is among them. By wonders of speech and deed His credentials are attested; but nothing avails. He is deemed fit for a cross, but not for a throne! Another failure! And the greatest tragedy of all. The vineyard-plans of the Divine Husbandman are all in vain. Wild grapes in abundance, but, the wine that maketh glad the heart of God—none! It is in vain the Father-Vinekeeper seeks it. All hopes are tragically dashed to the ground. This last effort, under such specially favourable conditions, having failed, it surely must be the last. It is indeed a dark moment. It looks as if nothing more remained but for God frankly to confess failure utter and

final, and to involve Israel and the whole of humanity in the disaster they deserved.

And, just then, came the most amazing thing of all. At that moment of deepest despair, with wild vines fit for nothing but fire spread over the ground in unashamed profusion, an astonishing declaration sounds forth. A Man, in all respects but one like others, stands forth in the vineyard and declares, "I am the True Vine"—the real, genuine Vine!

We listen as ones dazed. As we listen we are thrilled out of our despair. The Divine Husbandman, after all, has not failed! All the grapes are not wild. Here is a Vine with branches laden with real grapes. And into His vineyard the Divine Husbandman has come, has taken of the Eschol clusters, and, pressing them into His cup, has at last satisfied His patient heart with the wine that maketh glad the heart of God. From heaven the voice comes, "This is My Beloved Son; in Whom I am well pleased!"

IV

Leaving metaphor, here is, at last, the Perfect Man; the Man in God's image, and after God's likeness. For that, in plain prose, is what our Lord's declaration means. The True Vine is

the Ideal Man; man as in God's thought when He said, "Let us make man." Creation failed to produce such a man, for an enemy thwarted God, while man, morally and spiritually, was in the womb of the Edenic test. From that womb came forth, not a man, but an abortion; a monster. But, as God then warned the exultant enemy, There would yet appear a Man whose bruised heel would bruise his head. Knowing God's purpose the enemy fought it hard and long. Vineyard after vineyard was spoiled. But, a true vine must not be produced. The Seed of the woman must not be born. But, here is the enemy outwitted. The battle is won; the Perfect Man is produced. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad. Jehovah hath triumphed gloriously.

V

And yet—thrilled though our hearts are, there remain some questionings. Is this all? Should there not be something more?

Yes; here is the True Vine, the Perfect Man. Yes; but while we wonder at His marvellous beauty, there is the thought, He is but one. Will God be satisfied with one perfect man? Is not His thought that of a vineyard

rather than of a single vine? Here is a race of fallen men, of wild vines: has God no means of changing them?

On the face of it it looks as if this True Vine must occupy the vineyard all by Himself; the Perfect Man must stand in isolation. For God can produce no other man in the way in which this Man was produced. God can only become incarnate once, and if there is no other way than Divine incarnation by which to produce man in God's image, then, while this one Perfect Man is greatly to the glory of God, there seems no hope for men who are imperfect.

"I am the True Vine!" Yes, it is most wonderful; but then, I am not a true vine. It is no Gospel merely to show me the True Vine, The Godman, perfect and entire. I cannot imitate Him. I have failed, and failed dismally, to rise to a much lower ideal than that which I find in His perfection. To present Him to me as my Exemplar merely is cruelly to mock me in my helplessness. I am dying for mercy, for grace, for that which is not within that can lift me out of myself and re-make me. In short, I want a Gospel.

Is there a Gospel in the True Vine? Thank God, yes. He has not spoken it in the text, but, patiently listen, and you will hear it. You

will need the venturesome courage of faith to take it in; but here it is: "I am the Vine, ye are the branches!" Did you catch it? You—yes, you—can be vitally joined to, and made one with, the True Vine. There can be exchange of position: instead of being a branch of the wild vine you can be made a branch of the True Vine. The grafting in is possible. Already the True Vine is prepared for the grafting. In the bark is a cross-shaped incision, opened so as to receive you. Do you note the challenge? Will you be grafted in? You may, and are welcome. But, it will cost. That is inevitable. There is no grafting but there is the knife. It will cost you cutting away from the old vine; the sacrificing of the old life at its very source. For none can be in Christ and in Adam. The divine Husbandman has sent His Spirit to do the work; but He can only do it with your consent. Say, Yes, to Him, and the miracle is done. In Christ you too can please God. Abiding as a branch in the True Vine, and enduring the indispensable pruning, the Divine Husbandman will come and find on you also the fruit which yields the wine that maketh glad the heart of God.

LIFE'S FETTERS FREED

"But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

ROM. VI. 22.

THE chapter of our text is one of the most vital in, perhaps, the most vital of the New Testament Epistles. Finished with the theme of Justification, the Apostle strikes out to consider the indispensable corollary of Justification, namely, Sanctification; a theme which occupies him in this and the two chapters which follow.

The chapter's teaching on this important theme is special to it. It deals with that aspect of Sanctification which relates to sin. The verse taken as text is a specially rich one, for it seems to gather within itself the chief elements of the whole of the chapter's teaching. There is something all-inclusive in the four phrases of the verse: 1. "Free from Sin"; 2. "Servants to God"; 3. "Your fruit unto holiness"; 4. "The end everlasting life." A search into the meaning of such phrases cannot fail to be profitable.

I

"Free from sin" sounds a dominant note of the chapter. Three times are the words met with (vv. 7, 18, 22), a fact which indicates that they enshrine a thought of prevailing importance.

It is obvious that they are used to describe a present condition in the believer who is awakened to his privileges in Christ. They denote something already done. To avoid serious error into which many seem to have fallen, it is necessary carefully to consider the special content given the word "sin" in this chapter. It is notable that throughout "sin" is ever in the singular, never once in the plural. Then, obviously, it is regarded, not as an act or a principle, but rather as a master, a monarch, a despotic tyrant. In other words, sin is here personified, and it would be helpful if in this chapter it were written with a capital "S."

What has just been asserted concerning "sin" is borne out by such expressions as these: "Let not Sin therefore *reign* . . . that ye should *obey* it" (12); "sin shall not have *dominion over* you" (14); "Ye were the *servants* of Sin" (17). Thus, when Paul speaks of being "free from Sin," he is not thinking of what is ordinarily

meant by sinlessness. It is both an error in exegesis and a practical hindrance to Christian living to imagine that "free from Sin" here signifies freedom from Sin's taint and presence. Nowhere is such a state promised the believer this side of the redemption of the purchased possession. "The sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. vii. 17) will continue to haunt and harass while the believer is tied to "the body of this death."

Nevertheless, though Sin's presence may linger, there is a very real present experience of being "free from Sin." Though Sin continue to "dwell" in the mortal body, it need not, and should not, "reign." Paul's longing in Chapter vii is not so much for victory over Sin's power as for a complete ridding of Sin's presence.

"Free from Sin," therefore, means deliverance from Sin's thraldom, a breaking of Sin's tyrannising power.

This, it is interesting and important to repeat, is already effected in the case of the Apostle's Roman leaders. "But now being made free from Sin" are the surprising words. The act is both something done for them, and something done in the past. Such are the clear implications of the seven eloquent monosyllables. There was a state "when ye were the servants

of Sin" (v. 20), "but now" things are different; they are "free from Sin" and no longer Sin's servants. Nowhere here is there found anything in the nature of an urging to the believers to free themselves from Sin; rather, what is found is a simple declaration that their deliverance in that sense is already accomplished.

If it be asked when and how this freeing was done, the answer must be sought in some earlier verses. Verse 7 explains the "how," and verses 2 and 3 refer to the "when." The method of the deliverance from Sin is thus described: "He that hath died is freed from Sin." The time when that "dying" took place was when that happened which was expressed in their baptism.

"Freeing from Sin" is thus connected with an act in the past when they "died." Paul focuses attention on that act; an act, let it be specially noted, not a state. He does not invite here anything in the nature of introspection, whatever our faulty English renderings of Paul's tenses may suggest to the contrary. Paul's verb, "to die," is here constantly used by him in the tense signifying an act which is past, definite, positive, final. The "are dead" of the A.V. must therefore yield place to the "have died" of the R.V.

The fact, therefore, to which, for his present purpose, Paul refers, he would that his readers sought for, not within their inner emotional frames, but away back in their past. In their baptism was symbolised something which had happened in their own spirits and wills. They had died! They had died in the dying of Christ. His death was, not only a death *for*, but also a death *to* sin. In the latter sense they had shared His death. They too had died with Him to Sin.

Such a statement may have surprised them. It may be that they had never interpreted what had then happened in just that way. Possibly, the thought of dying to Sin had not been at all present to their minds in those days of early Christian experience. Paul's "Know ye not?" seems to suggest their ignorance on that point. But, whether they knew or not, the thing described as "dying to Sin" had happened. Paul does not urge them to die to Sin; rather he bids them reckon that it had actually taken place.

If it be asked how a thing of such moment happens without its being a matter of consciousness and of definite purpose, Paul's reply would be that it was implied and involved in another act. They had, he proceeds to remind them, been "baptised into Christ Jesus"; they had

believed in, and become united to, Him. Consciously, their volition was related to Christ; they chose Him as their Saviour, their Lord, their Life. Such a choice was momentous, and its implications many and radical. If the choice of Christ was real it had implications in relation to Sin; it meant an eschewing of Sin. Union with Christ involved a complete cut from the old life of uncleanness and iniquity. This interpretation by Paul of that involved in their professed initial faith would afford a severe test of that faith. Faith is never more thoroughly put to the test than when brought face to face with its own essential implications. If the faith of those Roman believers was genuine it would gladly respond to this unfolding of its hitherto unconceived content. Where there is a disinclination to regard faith as equivalent to a dying to Sin, no further proof is required of the falsity of the profession made in baptism. Faith, if it means anything, means union with Christ. Union with Christ is not union with Sin, but with purity and holiness. Such a union not merely necessitates, it is, a break with Sin.

"He then that hath died is freed from Sin." The "justified" of the R.V. may be preferred before the "freed" of the older rendering. In any case, the effect is the same, for "justified"

simply describes the method of the "freeing." It is a legal term. A slave has escaped from his master. A claim to his restoration is preferred. While the court discusses the matter, evidence is produced that the slave is dead. That has the effect of finally disposing of the suit. The discussion automatically closes. The claim falls to the ground. There remains no slave that can be proceeded against. The slave has died and so is "justified"—is "free." Likewise, judicially, the former slave of Sin no longer exists. He is united to Christ; a uniting that involves a real dying. That dying snapped the slave-bonds, and dissolved any claims Sin as master might otherwise insist on.

Moreover, what other effective way of escape from Sin's dominion can there be? No amount of mere negative dealing with Sin can avail, as the experience of countless millions testifies. Nothing short of "dying to Sin" will do. The break, to be of any use, must be immediate, and the most radical conceivable. Pledge-signing, struggling with sins one by one, and such methods only tend to fasten Sin's power the more firmly. Something that can be truly called "dying to Sin" is the only adequate way with it, and this must be one, final act at the very outset of the Christian life.

And, so tremendous an act it is that it passes altogether beyond the bounds of possibility except on one condition—oneness with Christ! The attitude is only possible in the power which He supplies. Dying becomes practicable only by the sharing of His life. Hence, those "dying to Sin" may not be thinking of such a thing at all; their conscious thought is probably the more positive one of choosing Christ Jesus. But, that positive act done, with what gladness are its implications one by one discovered! Among them comes the revelation that choosing the Holy One as Saviour there was a "dying to Sin"; and thenceforward there is daily rejoicing in "reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto Sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Here then is the simple fact—"died to Sin"; and the result of that fact—freedom from Sin's tyranny. Shall we then go on living as if that freeing were not a fact? Let our procured liberty be enjoyed. "Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal body." Stand up to the erstwhile master and defy its power. This can be done confidently, for "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace."

Thus there is power Divine to make good our

once-for-all dying to Sin and our daily refusal to let Sin reign. There has been a real freeing from Sin. We may sin, but we are no longer bound to sin. Once, Sin had power to compel; that power exists no longer where there is a soul joined to Christ.

> "He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
> And sets the prisoner free."

It is a beautiful sentiment in a hymn; it is infinitely more splendid in the life.

II

But, "being made free from Sin" is but preparatory. It is the removal of an obstacle; the obstacle in the way of our "becoming servants to God."

Service, of one kind or another, is unavoidable. Freedom does not mean absolute absence of external constraint and authority. It has been truly said that all the moral freedom a man possesses is freedom to choose his master. A master is indispensable and inevitable. There is no moral creature not dominated either by Sin or God. Sin's slaves, alas, while at liberty to sin, have no liberty to pass out from under

Sin's domination. Such liberty is the boon which Christ offers, and which He only can give. That liberty received, the believer is confronted with another service, the service of God.

This new service is variously denominated in our chapter, as also is that of Sin. The service of Sin is that of "Uncleanness" and "Iniquity." The service of God is that of "Obedience" and "Righteousness" (16, 19). It is the service of "Obedience": that is, of the willing, broken heart, of the love of God's law and will. Rebellious self-will, and love of one's own way are gone. The greater joy of submissiveness has been discovered and tasted. The spirit of humble obedience has come to reign, and they are its glad slaves.

The service of God is also the service of "Righteousness"; that righteousness in which all creation was conceived, which secures to Creator and creature their just places and demands, and that tends to the purity and bliss of all.

That is the service which now beckons the one "made free from Sin."

But it is a service entered into by a definite act; an act defined by the word "Yield," used so frequently in the latter portion of the chapter. This word is one of the only two imperatives

found in Romans vi. The other is "Reckon" (11). "Reckon!"—"Yield!" These exhaust the obligations laid upon such as enter into the experiences herein mentioned. "Reckon!"—reckon that ye are dead to Sin, and therefore made free from its domination and service. "Yield!"—as those that are alive unto God, yield yourselves under the yoke of God as His servants.

It is evident from the Apostle's treatment of the theme, that in this service to God the body occupies a place of vital importance, for, not content with urging, "Yield yourselves," he adds, "and your *members*" (13, 19). This gains significance when placed at the side of the words, "Let not Sin therefore reign in your *mortal body*." A careful reading of this chapter, as well as of the two that follow, impresses the fact that, in an altogether unrealised degree, the problem of Christian living, growth, and service, centres in the body. It is the only part of the believer's being where Sin still keeps a foothold. To borrow Bunyan's imagery, the enemies have been ousted from the citadel of "Man-soul," but they still lurk in the city walls and streets. While we are even now "receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls" (1 Pet. i. 9), the end of our

hope, "the redemption of our body," is still future (Rom. viii. 23).

Meanwhile, this sin-dwelt body must be a special object of concern. Sin, the old master, will again use its members if there is not alert watchfulness. Old tendencies remain, and old habits are not always broken summarily. Physical appetites, some of them natural and legitimate enough in themselves, are apt to claim inordinate indulgence. Though Canaan is entered, there still remain some of the aboriginal inhabitants to prove us and to afford opportunities for training in spiritual warfare.

In this warfare or service the "instruments" or "weapons" (R.V.) are our members" (13). There is, it is true, that service of God which Paul describes in the words, "Whom I serve in my spirit." But service in the wider sense demands the whole of the being; the physical members as well as the inner spirit. Feet run on God's errands; eyes seek opportunities of ministry; ears listen to the cry of need; brain designs ways and means; hands labour and toil; and lips speak words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Service, from which the body is excluded, would be service severely circumscribed.

More; it is by being placed at the disposal of God that the body is being prepared for its full redemption. The "keeping under the body" (1 Cor. ix. 27) is no mean part of the condition of gaining the prize.

But this belongs more naturally to our next point.

III

That point is suggested by the sentence, "Ye have your fruit unto holiness." The yielding of the body, freed from Sin's dominion, as an instrument of righteousness unto God, initiates a new service; the service of God. That service, in its turn, starts a process—the process of sanctification. Being servants to God has for its "fruit"—holiness.

"Fruit," obviously, is one side of a contrast. Fruit of a different kind is suggested in verse 21—suggested, not described: "What fruit had ye then (when servants of Sin) in the things whereof ye are now ashamed?" The former service of Sin bore fruit, but fruit whose description would tarnish the apostolic page. It must be left to the remembrance of Sin's erstwhile slaves. The blush on their cheeks is sufficient indication of its character.

In welcome contrast thereto, here is service whose "fruit" need cause no shame: the service of God leads to holiness.

"Holiness?" Well, not exactly. Paul's word suggests a process rather than a culmination; a path rather than a reached goal. Hence the Reviser's right preference for "sanctification" as a truer rendering than "holiness." This brings Sanctification before us in one of its two aspects in Scripture. Theorists may almost come to blows over the question whether Sanctification is an act or a process. It is both. And thus theological swords may return to their scabbards. It is a process started by an act; it is an act issuing in a process. Both act and process are found in our text, even if both are not so named. The sanctification which is an act is the "becoming servants to God"; the sanctification which is a process is the "fruit" of being servants to God.

Those of us who aspire to be holy, let us take careful note that holiness is something that grows, not in the service of Sin, but in that of God. Withdraw from God the body whose members He demands, and that very act arrests immediately any sanctifying process that may have been going on. Sin contaminates: it cannot purify; it stains: it cannot sanctify.

And, let not the vital point be missed; the sanctifying process is conditioned by the "yielding of the members." A body dominated by Sin, given the reins for any indulgence that might please, is no indication of a holy will and soul. There can be no holy living without a holy body.

IV

Three steps in the believer's experience have now been traced. We are not yet at the end. There has been a "freeing from Sin", a "yielding to God", and there is going on a process called "sanctification." Is not that "fruit" which is holiness the end? Nay; Paul gives "the end" another name—"And the end everlasting life."

"Everlasting life!" Hidden beneath this familiar phrase is the grand culmination of that work which began with "being made free from Sin." This is the glorious reward of "becoming servants to God"—"everlasting life!"

"Gift," of course, and not "reward," is Paul's word for this life: "the gift of God is eternal life." Still, it is nevertheless clear that while the reward is unmerited "gift," the "gift," after all, bears some relation to the service

rendered, for it is given to none save to such as have been "servants to God." It is also put in antithesis with "the wages (rather, 'ration') of Sin." Sin's servants are its slaves; slaves, unlike hired servants, are paid no wages; their ration is all they receive. And Sin's ration to its slaves is death. This ration—death—Sin doles out to its slaves with tragic faithfulness. They literally feed on death!

But—glorious contrast!—God's gift to His servants is Life; life in growing measure; more life as the capacity for it grows; life as the immediate reward of every yielding and obedience. And the end—Eternal life!

Thus, it is life all the way. It is eternal life when first faith accepts God's gift of His Son; for "he that hath the Son hath life." It is eternal life as the service of God is entered upon and pursued; for "the gift of God (the constant gift of God) is eternal life." And, when the goal of sanctification is reached, it is still eternal life: the end—the very last end of all—eternal life.

> "Moment by moment I'm kept in His love;
> Moment by moment I've life from above."

"Lay hold on eternal life" is the Apostle's exhortation to his young colleague, Timothy.

Eternal life, surely, that young disciple already possessed; but he is urged to regard that in his possession as but the prelude to, and the capacity for, more. The life of weakness must yield place to the life of strength; the life of ignorance and timidity, to that of intelligence and courage. Babe life must grow, and there must be no resting until the life of the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ is reached.

This—wondrous grace!—is the glory designed for erstwhile slaves of Sin. Let none of us miss it.

THE LIFE-GIFT

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

JOHN X. 10.

WE are listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd, presenting Himself in contrast to "the thieves and the robbers" who come not to save but to gain for themselves and destroy. The Good Shepherd is not self-seeking. The exploitation of the flock for His own selfish ends is far from His intention; rather, He is self-sacrificingly thinking of the need of the flock, and planning for its provision.

The purpose of our Lord's coming into the world is a matter of first importance. Why the leaving of the glory, the making Himself of no reputation, the being found in fashion as a man? What could have been the objective of such self-humiliation? What mission could it be that required such denial of self, such sacrifice, such suffering? Such questioning touches things innermost, vital, and capital.

Matters of such tremendous importance cannot be trusted to our surmisings. Hence, we are not left without authoritative information. The instruction comes with the highest authority —from Himself, the Good Shepherd. How often do we catch these and similar accents from His lips: "The Son of man is come to . . ."; "I came not to . . ."; "I am come that. . . ."

The text gives part of the Divine instruction. Our questioning is here answered by His words, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "Life"; a gift, and that gift in unstinted, overflowing measure! For the giving of that Life the Son of God has come.

Let us then, as we are able, gaze awhile at that wondrous Gift.

Its implications regarding the state of those to whom it is offered are too obvious to need mention now. Let rather the gift itself enthral our attention.

"Life!" What a word! Where is he with vision keen enough, with understanding profound enough, with speech eloquent enough to tell us what this gift is—"Life!" Life, wherever met, baffles both tongue and mind. Its mystery is unravelled, probably, unravelable. Definition is ruled out; a little description, and

that within the severest limits, is all that is left us.

This being so of all life, it is still more true of the "life" which the Good Shepherd has to give men. His gift is that of life at its highest; life indeed; life eternal and Divine. Who is sufficient when that life is the theme?

Still, though its heart be hidden, we may hear its throbbings. If the veil between us and its innermost shrine is not rent, we may still tread its courts and survey its walls. This then let us endeavour to do.

This ethical, spiritual thing, called "life" by its Divine Donor, is, of course, something with which we may connect such thoughts as Birth, Ideal, Nature, Method, Growth, Discipline, Resource. And thus, of this life it can be asserted that it is (*a*) natural in the method of its reception; (*b*) transcendent in its ideal; (*c*) unique in its nature; (*d*) severe in its method of development; (*e*) well-defined in the means of its discipline; and (*f*) adequate in its resource.

I

There is, first, the Method of its Reception.

The life-gift of which our Lord here speaks is life in its inner principle or content. The

word He selects for it signifies as much. He might have used another word meaning life in its outward forms and expression, but no; the word is that for that mysterious substance beneath all form and behind expression. The significance of this is inescapable. It suggests the radical character of our Lord's mission. His is not to take up life as already existing, and to direct it into more chaste and useful channels of expression. He is not a mere reformer of habits and behaviour. Morality and religion are not His first thoughts, but rather—Life!

His judgment of the condition of men is thus clearly implied; men are not merely sinful, but dead—unborn; spiritually non-existent. He has instructions as to behaviour towards God; that is, He is men's Teacher in matters of morality and religion; but, first of all, before such matters can even be broached, men need "life." Moral codes, religious ordinances, teachings on holiness there are, but they cannot be urged upon the spiritually dead. Such things must wait the reception of the gift of life.

There seem three ways in which the gift of life is imparted: creation, birth, resurrection. All these are used as metaphors in connection with this gift of eternal life. Resurrection restores life to one who, once possessing it,

has lost it. Birth is a method of life wherein agencies other than the Giver are present. Creation, unlike pro-creation, brings us to the original source of life. Each of these metaphors has its contribution to make to the full truth of the method of the reception of our Lord's gift of life.

It is obtained by means of resurrection. The life, though utterly new, is not without relation to our past. This life our humanity once possessed, but, alas, by enemy deceit it was lost. Sinfully grasping what the enemy falsely represented as life, the "life indeed" slipped from their hands, and death ensued. "Dead in trespasses and sins" truly is our condition. But, such is God's mercy, in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, that to the dead the lost life is restored. This is resurrection.

But in the reception of this life there are features which resurrection alone cannot suggest. Behind the reception there is preparation and agency. And to suggest these the metaphor of birth is used. Birth is the climax of a process which begetting begins. It is, so to speak, creation by means of appointed agency. The agency does not confer life; it simply mediates it. Likewise the life eternal is received by a process parallel to birth. "Ye must be born again" is the irrevocable condition written upon

the portal of this life. The Begetter is the Holy Spirit: "Except a man be *born . . . of the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5). The seed is the uttered Word of God: "Being *born*, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the Word of God* which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23). Falling into the prepared ground of "an honest and good heart"; heard, understood, and kept in that impregnated heart, this living Word germinates, grows, and comes to the birth. Thus, in the reception of the "life," the Spirit and the Word bear vital parts.

The thought, however, is not yet exhausted. The notion of creation needs to be added: "If any man is in Christ, there is a *new creation*" (2 Cor. v. 17, R.V. mg.). "The new man, which after God, is *created* in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24). This last metaphor brushes past all secondary causes and agencies to the Fount whence springs the life itself and all the activities used in its impartation. The reception of this life, whilst intensely human, is nevertheless a pure miracle. Whether regarded as resurrection, regeneration, or creation, the Divine character of the fact is writ large upon it. While there is, necessarily, a real co-operation on the part of the human, the gift itself is not human

in any sense, nor is the power by which it is received merely human. The life is not humanly produced, nor humanly merited. It is in no wise the end of a human process of any kind; moral, religious, or otherwise. Its possessor knows beyond a peradventure that this life is his by reason of a beneficence and a power altogether Divine.

II

Then, we think of this Life's Ideal.

No life at its reception is full grown. Birth brings into being a babe, not an adult. The miracle of birth is something supreme; still it but makes possible something even more transcendent. Birth starts growth on a new level and on a larger scale.

Salvation is not consummated when one is regenerated. The babe in Christ is not God's final objective. Set on the path of growth its goal is clearly marked. The adult state of the recipient of Divine life is attained when he is found in the image of Him Who came that he might have that life, not only in its initial stages, but in its fullest development.

Astounding thought! "Whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be *conformed to the image of His Son*" (Rom. viii. 29). "We

shall be *like Him*" is the simple and almost casual statement of the ideal of the life Christ gives. "Conformed to the image of His Son!" "Like Him!" Incredible! And yet, why not? This was unmistakably God's ideal for man in His original creation of him: "And God said, Let us make man *in our image, after our likeness*" (Gen. i. 26). Can it be that Redemption's ideal is lower than that of Creation? Will God be content with a less perfect man than the one envisaged in His first purpose? Surely not. And yet, somehow, there lurks in our minds an unacknowledged scepticism regarding God's ability to retrieve fully what in Eden was lost. We shall, it would seem, be satisfied if ultimately we approximate towards perfection, and shall deem it a praiseworthy achievement of grace if our present moral state as sinners is considerably improved. Why do we not see that that semi-conscious idea is both insulting to God and hindering to His work of grace?

The fact is, Redemption has set its heart on the full accomplishment of God's creation-purpose. In Christ God confidently and unerringly pursues the path toward absolute human perfection.

> "In Him the tribes of Adam boast
> More blessings than their father lost."

That human perfection is already exemplified. Christ is perfect Man. He is the Son, the image of the invisible God. All that Genesis i. 26 purposed is realised in Him. And, He is but the "Firstborn among many brethren." He is now engaged in "bringing many sons to glory"—His own glory; and, some day, He will know the joy of presenting them "faultless before the presence of His glory," each bearing His exact image.

It is indispensable that the human perfection of Christ's being and character be also found in us. Nothing less will satisfy either God or ourselves. It is not blasphemous, as some seem to think, to hope to share the measure of the full stature of Christ. As man, let it be said reverently, Christ is possessed of no superfluous perfection. He cannot be more than perfect, as also He could not be less than perfect. He is just perfect, and no whit more perfect than a perfect man should be. No man can be said to be fully saved until perfection is reached. The born-again one will not have realised the fullest possibility of his growth until he stands embodying in his own being and character all the lineaments of the human perfection of Christ. When the sons of God are manifested no eye will be able to detect in one of them the slightest

defect. They will be absolutely without "spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, . . . but holy and without blemish." This, and none other is the ideal. To keep meditating upon it is vital. To dream of a lower is fatal.

How wonderful must be the life-gift that can bear such glory! What other life could be capable of such development? Certainly, not our natural, fallen life. That life, derived from the first Adam, will bear culture a considerable distance along the way of morality and religion. Unregenerate souls often exhibit what, outwardly, is quite admirable in the way of virtue, and even piety. But there is a point where the life of nature fails. Inevitably, sooner or later, the self within sets a limit to moral endeavour. It agrees to advance only as long as its own survival is not imperilled. Self will never be capable of, nor amenable to, self-denial and self-sacrifice. Those who have any appreciation of the beauty of the human perfection of Christ will not need argument on this point. It is perfection whose chief feature is the crossing out rather than the glorifying of self. Thus, the old life, be the extent of its moral and religious culture what it may, must be exchanged for a life utterly different in its very substance, even that life which is the gift of Christ. That

life is the only life capable of expression in all the glory of the image and likeness of God.

III

The next word is one as to the Nature of this Life-gift of Christ.

The word "nature," just used, let it be confessed, is largely a term of convenience. The exact word is difficult to hit upon. All that is intended by its use is to indicate that which, in this "life," distinguishes it from every other. That quality, it is safe to say, is faith; faith which (as all true faith does) combines trust and obedience.

It is true of all creaturely life that it is not self-dependent, that is, complete in itself. Environment is indispensable, and life's capital is stored therein. Of no life is this so true as of the life-gift of Christ. In all the eloquent meaning of that phrase, it is "life IN Christ." For He is not only its Giver, but also, so to speak, its Environment. Union with Christ is the supreme condition of its reception; and communion with Him, of its culture. Apart from Christ the life is not merely arrested in its growth, it is non-existent.

The prevailing consciousness of the possessor of this life is not that of strength and wealth,

but rather of weakness and poverty. He is the man of the "broken heart"; who truly regards himself as "the chief of sinners" and "the least of all saints," and who rejoices in the beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It is not that he has not provision for his every need, and knows it, but it is provision "in Christ," and not in himself. At any given moment all his consciousness is summed up in two words—nothingness, and faith.

Plenteous resource; but in Another; and faith is but the link that joins weakness to Another's power; nothingness to Another's all-ness. Were the believer's resource in himself faith would be unnecessary. Consciousness of power, wisdom, and wealth is the sure decease of faith. Faith is the prerogative, the monopoly of the poor and needy.

For faith is dependence, and the more utter the dependence, the more perfect the faith. Self-sufficiency and self-dependence are the complete negation of faith; at least, of that faith by which God saves. And faith is the very heart of spirituality; the lack of it, the most hopeless of sins. Who is the fallen, the lost soul? The soul, separating itself from God, deceived into self-trust. And who, the saved, the new-born? The soul that, eschewing

self-dependence as the most heinous of sins, casts itself in utter helplessness upon God. Such a soul is possessed of life; life, not its own, but the gift of God. Faith, and faith alone, makes such a life possible. There is nothing so fatal to it as a sense of resource within one's self.

But faith is not only dependence on God's wealth and power; it is also dependence on His wisdom and authority. It is here faith becomes obedience. For, in the practical life, light and guidance are required; guidance which, when received, comes in the form of counsel and command. And so comes the opportunity for "the obedience of faith"; that supreme test of faith. Many seem able to trust God's power who fear His will, finding it difficult to believe that "God's foolishness" is wiser than their wisdom. The very last possession of self which most of us cast away is our supposed wisdom, tact, "common sense," or judgment. We continue to say, "We *know*," long after we have ceased saying, "We *can*." But the life in its satisfying fulness can never be ours until we trust our minds as well as our souls to God. Faith which is not obedience as well as trust is not faith unto the saving of our souls.

It is obvious that there is nothing more inwardly characteristic of the life we are meditating upon than faith. And, in order to its experience, we need nothing so much as a consciousness of utter need. A sense of strength rather than of weakness is the great hindrance. "Without Me ye can do NOTHING" is the hardest of all our Lord's sayings. We love the consciousness of being and of having. It is the sign of our fallen state, and an effectual barrier keeping us from the blessedness which is able to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me"; and again, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." That is the life and the language of faith. That is the life Christ came to give.

IV

Let a word about the Discipline of this Life be added.

As stated already, no life reaches maturity at the moment of its birth. The higher the life, the feebler is it at its birth, and the longer the gap between infancy and maturity.

Into the passage between these two points life depends largely upon discipline. Even in orders

lower than the human the usefulness of some animals depends upon disciplinary training. In that discipline wild instincts and dispositions are overcome, and there is a becoming accustomed and amenable to authority. In life which is human the same is necessary. Even were there no sinful tendencies discipline could not be dispensed with. It is said even of our incorruptible Lord that "though He was Son, yet *learned* He obedience" (Heb. v. 8). Also, even in His case, discipline was not unaccompanied by pain, for He learned obedience "by the things which He *suffered*."

In the holy mystery of this it is not necessary here to enter. It is indeed no mystery that, in our case, discipline should be a thing of suffering and pain. Bearing in ourselves, as we still do, the dreadful inheritance bequeathed us by our fallen progenitor, the daily cross is inevitable. The new life grows only at the expense of the old. Both together cannot thrive. One increases as the other decreases. Christ gains hold as self is denied.

What a mercy, thus reviewed, the cross is! His cross! For we suffer not, and die not, in isolation. The suffering and the dying are "with Him." Apart from Him and His life, to die to sin and self were impossible. It is

as we taste His life that we are enabled to crucify the flesh and the lusts thereof. And, as His life in us thus expresses itself, it establishes itself and grows. To accept the life Christ gives is thus to precipitate a war with the life already in possession, and to court a discipline painful in its experience but glorious in its result. "The fellowship of His sufferings" culminates in "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

V

All this more than suggests what may be called the Method of the Life.

The immediate effect of the Cross of Christ and of our daily cross is, practically, separation —separation from the world, sin, self, and all that is not of God; separation unto God, and unto God only. And what is this but what the Word of God calls holiness. The greater part, if not indeed the whole, of the meaning of that great word is exhausted when we say, Separation. All the multitudinous implications and applications of that term are what constitute practical holiness.

To put it otherwise, the life given by Christ involves a new attitude, a new purpose. The whole attitude to sin, self, the world, and God

is radically altered. Purposes that once ruled are relinquished, and in their stead come purposes that are utterly new. No longer is the flesh pampered and self obeyed; no longer are the world's favour and joy desired. With the new life have come a love for God and a surrender to His will. One's own way is henceforth recognised to be essentially godless. A sense of God's proprietorship rises up in the soul, and His sovereign rights are gladly acknowledged.

In such a case the separation referred to is a matter of course. Neither is it hid. In a world where each seeks his own, such a life is soon called eccentric. Holiness, while this order lasts, is bound to be odd. Separation unto God from self and sin resolves itself inevitably into separation from the present evil system, the world. Is it this fact that makes holiness unpopular among Christians? There is no objection to morality, up to a point, but when morality rises, as it should, to the point of godliness, it is immediately stamped upon. Hence, while there are many Christians, few, alas, bear the marks of holiness, and thus, the life within is quiescent, without either its normal expression or growth.

VI

Already, the point of the Resource of this Life has been touched upon. A further brief closing word may be permitted.

It may well be that a glance such as this at what the life-gift of Christ involves produces a sense bordering on despair. As the loftiness of its ideal, the exacting nature of its method, and the agony of its discipline are envisaged, it hardly surprises when the cry is pressed out of us, "Who is sufficient for these things?" They are at once recognised to be things beyond any resource within ourselves. Place before us a less glorious pattern, urge us to follow a line of less resistance, and demand of us a surrender somewhat qualified, and we may, perhaps, pluck up courage for the venture. But, to make the unadulterated purity of Christ our ideal, to give up all, to suffer with Him death to sin and self! This surely is beyond our powers. We might think it to be exceptionally desirable, but, well—impossible!

It is at such a point that vision is needed to perceive the Gospel of the whole matter. From the point of view of our resource—or, rather, lack of resource—it is admittedly impossible.

But, is not the Gospel the news that God has made possible the impossible? Where we cannot God can and will. What is beyond us God offers to do both in and for us.

If this is not the final meaning of life which is a gift, what else can it be? If it is not this then it is neither a gift, nor life. God's *demand* from us is life; just such life as we have glanced at. But He Who demands this life is He Who in the text speaks, saying, "I am come that they might *have* life." So, while God diminishes nothing of His claims upon us, He adds to His holy law the Gospel of grace, wherein He offers to supply all that He demands.

This life, after all, is more than the word itself can suggest. It is really a Person. The life offered is in the Living One. "This life is in His Son," and "he that hath the Son hath life." Thus is shown the resource for this impossible life. And it is adequate even for that. "Christ liveth in me" solves the otherwise insoluble. "I can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth me" is the humble but confident boast of one who had put the matter to the proof.

It is evident therefore that here is a genuine gift, and that all that is required of us is its acceptance. Here the Giver of life announces

His coming and its gracious purpose. The incalculable gift He offers to all, without money, without measure. Impossible! Was that the word? Is the acceptance of a gift impossible? If it is, what does it prove? Our excuses are at once exposed as cloaks upon a lack of desire and will.

The gift is a reality. It is also a gift constant in its supply. Never a need but the adequate provision is there to meet it. It is not merely a pattern, but inspiration, ability, courage, joy. It is life in all that that great word means. Life —whether it be in the form of truth, wisdom, zeal, love, or power—may be ours. Life, in all its phases and degrees, all the way from incipient forms to its full Christlike maturity. Life, yea, and life more abundantly.

THE LIFE-CHARACTER

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 THESS. v. 23.

THE Thessalonian Epistles deserve the apellation, "The Epistles of the Advent." That the Advent is their dominant theme is at once apparent. Taking only the former of the two —the Epistle of our text—it is interesting to note that each of its five chapters ends with a definite mention of the Lord's Coming, while, in the fourth chapter, is found the record of a revelation just received by the Apostle concerning a feature of the Coming.

Were this first Epistle searched for the theme next in importance to that of the Advent, there would be no difficulty in agreeing that that theme is, Holiness, or Sanctification. These words, in one form or another, occur no less than eleven times in this short writing. Paul refers to his own holy behaviour when in Thessalonica, urges similar holiness upon his

readers, and prays that they might be wholly sanctified.

This conjunction of the Advent and Holiness in this marked degree is worth a moment's attention. It is not, of course, in any sense surprising, for those familiar with the New Testament know that they are constantly found together. There is no state that fits one for the Advent if holiness is lacking, nor is there so effectual a motive to holiness as the expectation of the Advent. It is also worth mentioning that in present-day teaching these two themes are either found together or both missing. It is where the Advent is a living hope that holiness is stressed, and there are few or none who urge holiness on believers who do not also urge the expectation of the Lord's Return. This fact is too eloquent to need labouring. So intimately wedded are the "blessed hope" and the holy life, that both either appear or disappear together. No man who does not follow after holiness will readily cherish the thought of the Lord's imminent appearing, and he who looks not for that appearing lacks one of the most potent of motives to holiness.

I

Holiness, the great thought in our text, is a matter of prominence, not only in this Epistle, but throughout Scripture. So important has it been deemed that, in all ages, when spiritual decline threatened the Church, groups have here and there arisen to save it from utter neglect. While these groups have thus rendered service of incalculable value, they have not always been successful in the interpretation of their characteristic theme. One-sidedness, in most cases, has severely circumscribed their usefulness. Their teaching, often, has been less the elucidation of Scripture than the expression of their own genuine but largely emotional experience of the Spirit's sanctifying work within. Whilst experience often illuminates the meaning of the Word, it is safe to accept the Word's verdict on our experience, rather than the contrary. What seems to us at a given moment to be true is not necessarily true.

It is, however, agreed that at the root of the meaning of sanctification, or holiness, is the idea of set-apartness. The thought of separation, indeed, is of its essence. In most cases of

its use, especially in the Old Testament, there seems little else in the word. It is in this simple sense that our Lord uses it: "For their sakes I *sanctify* Myself."

There were, under the Mosaic economy, many things characterised as "holy," and which were holy in no other sense than that of set-apartness. For example, in one of the tents in the Israelite camp, and in the holy Tabernacle in the midst of the Camp, there could, in all probability, be found vessels exactly similar in every material sense. Held side by side they would be seen to be of the same metal, size, and shape, and embellished with the same engraved pattern. Outwardly, there is not the slightest difference. And yet, a difference there is, and one of vital moment. One is common, or profane; the other is holy. That difference, as is obvious, arises not from any accident in the substance, form, or size of the vessels, but simply from the fact that one of them is earmarked for a use peculiar and exclusive. The vessel from the Israelite's tent may be used by any one and for any purpose; that in the Tabernacle may not be put to any use save that of Divine worship. This latter is thus sanctified, consecrated. It is holy; and its holiness, as is clear, is simply and purely a matter of relation. Take it away from

its peculiar dedication and it is no more holy than the other.

Hence, that in common use is not holy; that exclusively used by or for God is holy.

It is questionable, after all, whether there is, or need be, in the word "holiness" a greater content than this thought of set-apartness. Israel was called a "*holy* nation." And it was, and is, that in spite of a behaviour and character which were far from deserving that appellation. Singled out and chosen from among all nations it became uniquely related to God and His world-purpose. This "holy" people's conduct was far from being holy, and the word significantly used to denote such conduct was "adultery"; another word indicative of relation. Adultery stands for a relation which is mixed and therefore impure, while holiness speaks of a relation which is single, simple, and therefore pure. The holy one is the wedded, the dedicated one, the one faithful to the vow fixing a relation exclusive of every other.

Thus the holy person is the set-apart one—set apart for God, exclusively.

First, the person himself, in all the parts of his being, is set apart for God—that is the sanctification which is an act once and for all; then, in every word and deed the behaviour is planned

on the same pattern of set-apartness—that is the sanctification which is a process. We may call holiness purity, if we so desire, but it is important to note that the purity in holiness is the purity of relation and attitude. It is fidelity comparable to that which is marital.

II

This main notion having been grasped, we may go on to inquire what special contribution to our understanding of the theme is contained in our Epistle, and especially in our text.

Two or three verses in the fourth chapter will repay a glance in passing. "For this," says verse 3, "is the will of God, even your sanctification." Verse 7 adds, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." A reading of the whole passage in which these statements occur shows holiness to be a requisite quality of what is called the "vessel" (verse 4), that is, the physical body, and that the sanctification of the body is the subject of God's special "calling" to the believer. As these points belong also to our text, for the moment they are passed over while attention is given to two things not particularly present therein.

First, holiness is "the will of God." Hence,

obviously, His command "Be ye holy." As believers we should mark this carefully, and respond to it instantly. That anything is the will of God settles the matter for the true Christian soul. Questioning, and arguing, and reluctance have no place here. What God has chosen settles our choice. If God wills that we should be holy, no real child of God can choose to be other than holy, or even that in any attenuated form. It must be holiness; not mere morality of the popular order. Nothing short of holiness as God wills it will satisfy Him—or us. Here, then, is God, not advising but commanding, not indicating what is highly desirable merely, but absolutely indispensable. "This is the *will* of God—your sanctification."

It is not easy to say what holiness is, but verse 7 helps by telling us what it is not: "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." Some things are best defined by their known contrasts. Holiness is the opposite of uncleanness. Dirt, filth—material or moral—are not found among its elements. Among the ceremonial classifications in the Jewish system of worship were: the clean and the unclean; the holy and the unholy. Not all the "clean" things were holy, but none but

" clean " things were admitted into the class of the holy. A holy thing must first be clean. A simple thought, perhaps, but one to be ruthlessly applied. Let us beware of the blasphemy of excusing in our redeemed being habits which, even in themselves, are unclean and malodorous. The first condition of holiness is absent while what is unclean is allowed to remain. Lust, concupiscence, and fornication are the special kinds of uncleanness the apostolic writer has here in mind; thus once more stressing that holiness is a matter of relation, and also a characteristic of the condition of our human bodies.

III

It remains that we allow our text to add its special contribution to our meditation. First of all, it is notable that Paul views the human being as tripartite in spirit, soul and body, a view which seems to prevail throughout Scripture. Distinction is not usually made between " soul " and " spirit " but the Word of God is stated to be capable of it, being " living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit " (Heb. iv. 12). In any case the whole of the believer's being is to be the object of sanctification,

no element therein being left out, for not one of the elements can be holy while the others are unholy.

Ordinarily, in our speech, we show inclination to reverse Paul's order and speak of body, soul and spirit. But the spirit rightly comes first; for spirit is what we are. I cannot say, I am a soul or a body. Of them I can say, I have a soul, I have a body; but spirit is not a possession of mine; it is myself—I am a spirit. This is part of "the image of God" in which I was created for "God is Spirit" (John iv. 24). Spirit then is that element of my being where I am closest to God, where I have some affinity with Him; where fellowship with Him is possible. Here, if at all, I must be linked on to Him in community of life.

It is not without deep meaning that our human constitution is likened unto a temple; a temple in three parts—court, holy place, holiest. The holiest in the human temple is the spirit. That holiest is designed as the dwelling-place of God. And the holiness of our human spirit consists in its exclusive possession by God. None other but He has a right to that noblest of sanctuaries. Self and Satan contest its possession, but its holiness must not be compromised, and God will not share it with another.

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be;
Help me to tear it from its throne
And worship only Thee."

From the spirit we come to soul and body; two parts, so to speak, of the mechanism of our being. While life has its seat in the spirit, it finds its expression by means of the soul and body.

The soul—what a realm it is! Its faculties and powers are many: will, intellect, imagination, conscience, emotion, to speak only of the chief. Here again it is not difficult to apply the principle basal to holiness. A holy will is one surrendered to God and to Him alone. A holy mind is one dedicated exclusively to the wisdom which is not of this world. A holy conscience is one illumined by the ideals found in the teaching and character of our Lord. A holy emotion is one stirred by the touch of the Spirit of truth, but never permitted to pander to the delectation of the flesh. Where holiness characterises the soul there is a sense of beautiful poise and restraint.

Lastly, holiness must also be a quality of the body. A thing of matter it still has a place in God's service. It has just been stated that

soul and body are the means whereby the life finds expression. By means of the soul and its faculties it finds expression to the ego within; by means of the body, to the world without. Just as, then, no life save that of the Holy Spirit within should be revealed to the self-consciousness through the soul and its faculties, no life but that same life should be revealed to the world through the body and its members. God lays claim to all the avenues of life. To deny God exclusive use of the mechanism of our being for the expression of His life within is not only to deny Him His rights but also to deny ourselves the means of discipline and growth. Our bodies withheld from God is not only to rob God but also to make practical holiness impossible. A holy body is the indispensable condition of a holy walk. They are never found in separation.

This sanctification of our whole being is the act of God, "the God of peace"; the God Who is not perturbed by difficulty or foe, but Who is absolutely sure of His ability to accomplish that whereto He has set His hand. It is to Him Paul addresses the prayer of our text, not only that we might be sanctified wholly but that, once set apart unto God, that relation and attitude might be preserved entire and

unviolated, and we ourselves be found " blameless at the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the utmost comfort to know that God is the One Who has entrusted Himself with this tremendous achievement. No other could. The initial act as well as the whole process of sanctification are His alone. If we will to do His will which is our sanctification, or if we follow after sanctification as the call of God to us in every thing we do, then it is He " that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Christ is God's Gift of Sanctification to us as He is also His Gift of Righteousness. " Faithful is He that calleth you, Who *also* will *do* it."

Thus our sanctification is God's will, God's call, God's act. And His will be the praise for ever.

HIS SAVING LIFE

"*We shall be saved by His Life.*"
ROM. V. 10.

TAKEN thus right out of their context the words almost startle. Their statement sounds unfamiliar and almost questionable. The first impulse, perhaps, is to doubt whether any such words are found in God's Book. But the words are there, and if their message sounds unfamiliar and strange, it but argues a tremendous spiritual loss. The aspect of Christ's redemptive work to which they refer is one of the most vital.

An impression prevails that the work of salvation is due exclusively to our Lord's death; that besides the Cross there is no other redemptive work that deserves mention. It is doubtless true that what our Lord did by His blood-shedding was complete in itself, and that some aspects of our salvation need no other cause to account for them but the expiation on Calvary. But when we turn to consider salvation

in the fullest sense; that salvation that not only pardons but perfects, then other factors are necessarily brought in: And there are hosts of Christians who have never seen that Christ not only died, but also rose and now lives to save His people. That is what our text so positively asserts: "We shall be saved by His life."

I

It is necessary, first of all, to notice that the verb in the sentence is in the future tense—"We *shall* be saved." Here is a stress that is too rare. The verb in the past tense is one with which all of us are familiar. "I was saved"; "Praise God, I am saved," is language common enough. And such testimonies, it must be owned, usually carry the impression that the measure of salvation testified to and already experienced is all that the witnesses hope for or even are aware of as possible. And yet in the Book of our salvation—the New Testament—while salvation is mentioned as an experience, it is much more frequently referred to as a hope. Any one who cares to make the search can see that the verb "to save" is far oftener found in the future tense than in the past tense. This

is not the place for detailed evidence on such a point, but one or two texts may be quoted. There are the texts that speak of "salvation" as something to be arrived at and hoped for. "Godly sorrow" we are told, "worketh repentance unto salvation" (2 Cor. vii. 10). Speaking of his affliction, from his Roman prison Paul writes, "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation" (Phil. i. 19). Angels, according to Hebrews i. 14, are "Ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." The Lord's future advent is described as "appearing the second time without sin unto salvation" for them who wait for him (Heb. ix. 28). Peter speaks of the "salvation ready to be revealed at the last time," and says that the regenerated ones are "kept by the power of God *unto*" that salvation (1 Pet. i. 5). He also urges, as the R.V. translates him, that believers should "desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby *unto* salvation." In all these cases salvation is regarded in its future aspect. It is also eloquently significant that, in their expectation of the Lord's return, the apostles and the church in their age looked for Him as "Saviour." "For our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the *Saviour*" (Phil. iii. 20). "The Grace of God"

taught them to live soberly, righteously, and godly, " looking for the glorious appearing of the great God and *Saviour* Jesus Christ " (Titus ii. 11–13). All of which shows that salvation, while an act, is also a process to be consummated at the Lord's Return. Thus, those who are saved, should also make sure that they are being saved, and hope to the end for the greater salvation still ahead. Growth in Grace, as every other growth, demands " forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." " We shall be saved " as we " Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

II

This emphasis—all too rare—suggests that salvation is a much greater thing than is generally imagined. How few, even among ourselves as Christians, think of salvation in terms of holy character and perfection of being. An escape from hell is all it means to thousands. It has been limited to the blessings received when first we believe—pardon, peace, regeneration, justification.

See how the apostle puts matters in the context. He writes to people whom he regards as " being

justified" and "being reconciled," and does so in order to urge them to hope confidently that they "shall be saved." "Being now justified . . . we shall be saved" (9); "Being reconciled, we shall be saved" (10). It almost sounds as if to be justified and reconciled merely prepared the way for salvation; that the chiefest, the most characteristic part of salvation only begins when these are accomplished. The analysis of the wondrous work thus suggested, if not over-strained, can be very useful. It is at least far safer to regard as salvation what follows the initial blessings already referred to than to regard it, as the vast majority of Christians seek to do, as limited to them.

There are certain obstacles to salvation in its fullest sense. There are, for example, the sense of guilt in the conscience, and enmity to God in the heart. Pardon, which is part of justification, removes the guilt of sin in the conscience; while reconciliation, which includes regeneration, removes heart enmity and sets the rebel at peace with God. These—the evil conscience and the evil heart—must be removed if the process of character salvation is to be initiated. And these miracles are wrought by the Spirit on the ground of, and by means of the Blood

and the Cross of Christ. The connection between these initial blessings and Calvary's atoning work is here explicitly affirmed: "Being now justified *by His blood*"; "We were reconciled to God *by the death* of His Son." By the Cross, therefore, the guilt on account of sin, and the enmity of the natural heart are removed. Pardon and justification are through the Cross because the penalty due to our sins was borne by Another Who in love took our place. The Cross is the source of peace and reconciliation, because there, the enemy as well as his sins, was crucified. The peace is verily, "Peace through the blood of the cross," the gibbet, on which, in His Substitute, the enemy was executed.

III

Thus far the blessings of redemption are attributed exclusively to the Blood and Death of Christ. Justification is "by His Blood," and Reconciliation, "by His Death." Then come the striking affirmations, "Being now justified, we shall be saved" and "Being reconciled we shall be saved"—"saved by His life."

Here then enters a new factor. Salvation is not only by the Death of our Lord but also by

His life. Here is a truth about which, it is notorious, we Christians are extremely ignorant. Somehow it is easier to take in the truth about the salvation that comes by the Death of Christ than the other about salvation through His life. The writer to the Hebrews has many things to say regarding this but finds them difficult to interpret because the hearing of his readers was dull. They had had sufficient time in which to grow and become teachers, but instead they were still at their elementary lessons—the first principles of the oracles of God. He would give them solid food, but they were not yet past the babe stage of milk. Their unexercised senses made them incapable of receiving the truth about salvation through the intercessory life of the Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

And thus, be it marked, is the "life" by which we are saved. There was, of course, the pre-Calvary life of our Lord, the life in which the Lamb was prepared for the Altar. A great stress is to-day laid upon that life—its immaculate purity, its loving-kindness,—as if its imitation were the means of our salvation. But when Paul speaks of our being "saved by His life," He is not thinking of life that led to the Cross, but the life of our Lord's resurrection, and ascension; His present life. It is through that life

that salvation in its richer, final aspects can be ours.

It is a most arresting thought that He Who once died for men has ever since His resurrection been living for His people. Once the Sacrifice upon the Altar, He is now the Priest in the Holiest. The Propitiator has become the intercessor. The place of the Interceding Priest in the economy of redemption is not so well understood as the place of the Expiating Offering. Leviticus xvi makes instructive reading in this connection. There we find in detail the ritual of the annual great Day of Atonement. The high-priest ministered not only at the Altar in the court, but also entered the Holiest of All. The sprinkling of the blood upon the Mercy Seat was as important as its shedding upon the altar. The blood shed upon the altar did much; the blood sprinkled within the veil did more. Intercession added to propitiation completed the work. The priest made effective all that the altar had made possible.

A truth of immense importance it is that salvation following its initial blessings is contact and communion with God. This is illustrated in the story of Israel. Many marvellous experiences were theirs during the period of the Plagues and in their exodus from the land of bondage. But

not far from the Red Sea a halt is called, and for nearly a year not another step toward Canaan was taken. During that year the Tabernacle was reared—a home for their God Who had joined them in their pilgrimage. The further stages of their journey would be impossible without God in their midst, close at hand, easily accessible.

It was when God had His tent among their tents that the priesthood and all its elaborate organisations were established. God is a Holy God: His people are sinful. Thus if He is to dwell in contact with them the altar, mercy seat, and priest are necessary. All these are there to deal with daily reasons why a Holy God should not dwell among a people full of moral defects. Their ministry was to preserve contact between His light and their darkness; His purity and their corruption.

In all this which could, were there time, be profitably considered in detail, is found the prefigurement of God's redemptive ways in Christ. We too, though we may have left the Egypt of our unregenerate past, can never reach the Canaan of full salvation apart from touch and fellowship with God. God's works on our behalf, and our vivid experience of them can never fill the place of God Himself. And

so we learn that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might *bring us to God*" (1 Pet. iii. 18). "Ye who sometimes were far off are *made nigh* by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13). "Through Him we have *access . . . unto the Father*" (Eph. ii. 18). Accordingly, there is the constant urging of the Hebrews Epistle, "Let us draw near"; as also the purpose of apostolic testimony, "That ye also may have *fellowship* with us; and truly our *fellowship is with the Father*, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). Here is an indispensable condition of salvation—access to and fellowship with God. And that access has been made possible by the atoning sufferings and blood-shedding of our Lord. On the ground of His work on the Cross He, as it were, introduces every believer into the presence of God that in that presence the further work of his salvation may go on; for it is only within the veil souls are perfected in the image of God: "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Nowhere save in the presence and fellowship of God do the redemptive powers that cleanse and sanctify operate. "He is able to save to the uttermost" we often gladly recall.

But whom is He thus able to save? None save "Those who *come to God* by Him" (Heb. vii. 25).

Thus is it abundantly clear that salvation, as it affects character, is conditioned by close and intimate contact with God, a contact established by faith in the atoning altar-sacrifice of our Lord.

But then arises another problem. The contact made, how can it be preserved? For though justified and brought to God the believer is yet imperfect. His constant faults and sins cannot but affect his standing in the presence of God Who is holy. His sins endanger the contact with God, and yet without that contact He will never be anything but a sinner. How does God's plan in Christ deal with that problem and solve what seemingly is insoluble? The answer is found in the passing of Christ from the Altar into the Holiest. He, the Sacrifice becomes the Priest. The Blood once shed is taken within the veil to be sprinkled. He Who once died to save now lives to save. The accusations of the enemy against those whom God accepts in Christ are answered by the advocacy of the Paraclete in heaven. The Blood taken into the Holiest becomes vocal, speaking better things than that of Abel. In

every sprinkling of it God sees reason sufficient for maintaining contact with His imperfect people, just as, at the first, in its shedding once for all, He found righteous ground for giving them access into His holy presence.

And He Who shed it sprinkles it. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." "We shall be saved by His *life*." Amazing thought! There is nothing half so amazing except the tragic indifference of Christians to it.

Think what a tremendous matter our salvation must be. It needs that Christ should die for us. More; it needs that, having died, He should go on living for us. Calvary alone is not sufficient. The Sacrifice without the intercession is unavailing. The Altar without the Holiest can never fulfil the redemptive purpose. Being justified by His blood we shall be saved by His life.

And, what love is His that causes Him to count nothing necessary to our salvation too great. He was willing to die, but as wonderful as that, He has been willing to live also in untiring work toward our complete redemption. Marvellous as was His death for us it was done in a brief space of time, but for centuries He has *lived* for us. Ever since His ascension for never a moment has His priestly

work ceased. Having loved His own which are in the world, He will love them unto the end. Having begun the work He will perfect it. He will not be satisfied until in His own He sees His seed—His own perfect likeness.

LIFE WITHIN

"He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

JOHN XX. 22.

IT was the evening of the third day—the first day of the week. To the disciples it had been an eventful day, a day of alternating hope and doubt. Early in the morning strange rumours had been afloat. The tomb was empty, if it was true what some of the number insisted. Mary and Peter declared that they had seen Him. It was a day in which desire hungered for fact sufficient and final. And now, the sun had set and they were gathered behind barred doors discussing the day and its rumours. A few believed, but most doubted. Soon there was a knock at the door. They were two who, some hours previously had left for Emmaus. Their return was unexpected. It was soon explained. They too had seen Him, "and they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known to them in the breaking of the bread."

Peter's testimony thus confirmed, the doubters became less confident.

The discussion, however, went on unabated until—a sudden hush! No one knew why the voices were silenced, except that there was the sense of a Presence. Together with the rest the two who had seen Him vanish saw Him reappear. No; He did not enter through the door, He simply "stood in the midst." It was their Lord risen unmistakably. Their first feeling was one of dread and fear. That was allayed with His re-assuring, "Peace be unto you." The credentials of His risen identity—His hands and His side—shown, fear is lost in gladness—overwhelming joy. And, as His "peace be unto you" had delivered from excessive fear so does its repetition moderate emotion at the opposite extreme.

Delirium, both of fear and joy over, they are solemnly commissioned, "As My Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

The great significance of what happened there and then in that upper chamber has not, one fears, impressed itself sufficiently on our minds. The more dramatic events of Pentecost, weeks later, have been permitted to overwhelm it.

Is it credible that, when our Lord breathed upon them saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," there was no immediate result? Did they not that very moment receive the Holy Ghost? Or, is it our notion that that receiving did not become effectual until Pentecost? Such a thought seems to betray failure in distinguishing things that differ. Pentecost has been called "the natal day" of the Church. Then what name, if not Church, would we give to that company in Acts i that gathered to pray and to appoint one for the vacancy left by Judas? Pentecost, surely, did not bring the Church into being; it rather energised an already-existing Church for its appointed witness. The Church came into being the night of "the third day," when, breathing upon the disciples, the Lord said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Pentecost brought the "New Tongue," but the "New heart" had come weeks before. He who "breathed upon them" had breathed not in vain. He spake, and it was done.

Like Pentecost, there was in that "receiving of the Holy Ghost" something unique and unrepeatable. In some respects it was something once for all. It made one those first disciples, incorporating them into one entity, the Church. The Church is not born continually, her birth

is an act of a moment, that moment when her Creator by His resurrection breath brought her forth. Henceforth individuals are added to her as each comes under the same creative breath. No one belongs to that spiritual Body save such as have received the Holy Ghost. His presence and indwelling form the bond between member and member. It is the supreme distinction between "the world" and "the Church": the world "*cannot* receive" the Spirit (John xiv. 17); the Church is the Church because she *has* received Him.

I

Hence, when we speak of a member of the Church, a believer in Christ, we speak of one of whom it can be truly said that he has "received the Holy Ghost." That fact is one which the New Testament constantly acknowledges and builds upon. There is only one instance therein where persons are asked whether they "had received the Holy Ghost." And that instance has been gravely misapplied. Believers, on the supposed basis of that record, have in some cases been regarded as being such as have not the Holy Ghost, and been urged to receive Him. But careful attention to the passage

reveals that the twelve disciples at Ephesus, on their own confession, were not Christian believers at all. They had been baptised unto John's baptism, but apparently, had never obeyed John's urging that "they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus" (Acts xix. 1–7). Thus the irrelevancy of the passage to the important matter before us is obvious. Believers are urged to be "filled with the Spirit" but nowhere in the Acts and the Epistles are they urged to "receive" Him. Rather, as already averred, He is regarded as already in possession as the Indweller.

A few texts, out of many, will suffice to stress this important point of New Testament teaching. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9), the converse being obviously suggested—If any man is His, he has the Spirit of Christ. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*" (1 Cor. iii. 16). "Know ye not that your body is the temple of *the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?*" (1 Cor. vi. 19). "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, saying, Abba Father" (Gal. iv. 6). It were easy to go on quoting, but let these Scriptures suffice. They clearly teach what is confirmed by scores

of others that there is no born again one who has not the Spirit of God, that the Spirit enters to dwell because of the relation of child to God, and that He makes the body His temple. All this, impossible of being gainsaid, is fundamental to any true teaching as to the Holy Spirit's relation to the believer. If, as believers, we are urged to "receive" the holy Ghost let that not be done on the wrong assumption that the Holy Spirit is not already graciously indwelling us.

II

Of course—and here is a most practical point—it is possible for a believer to be indwelt by the Spirit and be quite ignorant of the mighty fact. It would seem that that was the general state of things in the Corinthian Church. Paul's "Know ye not" in verses just quoted would appear to imply as much. The Holy Spirit in the believer, and yet the believer unaware of it! It might appear a strange and even an impossible thing, yet is it not true of believers generally even to-day?

Whilst, from one point of view, such a fact may appear incredible, from another it should not shock us. For all the implications of his faith are not immediately discovered by the

believer. Things occur in the moment of his regeneration which, in some cases, are not realised for years afterwards. All that the "new creation in Christ" involves is but gradually unveiled as the believer goes on walking and growing in grace. Faith, and oneness with Christ are mighty things, and where is he who has yet fathomed the depth of the wealth of their mystery? The maturest believer has many surprises in store for him as he experimentally explores all that Grace did for him when it translated him out of Adam into Christ.

And yet there are some of faith's implications which may not tarry. The knowledge of some of the facts concerning us in Christ is indispensable if we are to make any real spiritual progress. And one of those is that blessed fact of our being indwelt by the Holy Ghost. It is difficult to see how any one ignorant of such a truth can live the life that is really Christ, or even clearly realise what such a life is.

III

Now if, among those who listen to these words, there be a believer who has not hitherto acknowledged the presence of the Spirit of God within himself, let him be earnestly urged to do

so now. Such a "receiving" of the Holy Ghost is the only receiving possible to him. It is not the same sort of "receiving" as that in our text, but it is a true "receiving" nevertheless. For "receiving," properly speaking, involves conscious volition. Also, possession and conscious reception do not always go together. In other words, it is possible to have without having received. A simple illustration will make that clear. A friend, let us suppose, surreptitiously slips a bank note into one's pocket. It is not, one readily grants, an ordinary event, but still it is conceivable. That bank note then is in my pocket. I *have* that bank note, but I have not "received" it. In fact I am not yet aware of its being there. My friend never told me when he put it there. My ignorance of its presence in my pocket does not in the least affect the genuineness of the fact of its being there. My knowing I have it does not, that is, condition my *having* it. But while I am ignorant of my possession to all practical purposes it is as if I did not have it. It is a possession in which I have had no fellowship with the giver. He gave but I have not received. Presently, however, I thrust my hand into my pocket. To my surprise I feel there a bit of crisp paper. What can it be? I pluck it out. It is a bank

note. It challenges me. Immediately I am faced with the necessity of decision. The decision in such a case, may be, is not difficult, but decision there must be. I must decide whether I retain or reject that bank note. Persuaded that its possession is as honest as it is desirable I place it back in my pocket. By that act I "receive" what even before that act was mine. It was mine before; it is now mine by the knowledge of my mind and the consent of my will. And who will say but that by that consciousness and consent it is mine in an infinitely more real and useful way.

The application of that simple illustration is obvious. I am a believer in Christ. Faith, the gift of God, has linked me on to the power that creates men anew. I am a child of God. The moment of that miracle saw the Holy Spirit enter and take possession of my being. His indwelling has been a fact ever since I was saved. But I have been ignorant of it. I have, perhaps, read but little of the Word given to reveal that and other facts, or, having read, I have done so to little purpose; and so, while all the while I have been the temple of God the Holy Ghost, that marvellous fact has been hid from me. But, it is hid no longer. I see it now, and the wonder grows that I could have

been for so long blind to it. The Holy Spirit dwells in me! Wondrous indeed!

It isn't that I feel that it is so. I look within in vain for any emotional sign. Nor do I understand it. My mind utterly fails to comprehend how a person can live within a person, and especially how my finite being can become the shrine of the Infinite Himself. But the fact is revealed in God's Word. I accept that testimony as satisfactory and final. I rest my faith implicitly upon it as being testimony more reliable than that of any internal feeling or mental comprehension. Just because God reveals to me in His Word that being His child His Holy Spirit dwells in me, I acknowledge that tremendous fact to be true. I declare it in faith, the Holy Spirit is in my heart.

Having taken that step I take another. I cannot stop at the mere acknowledgment of the fact. The fact challenges not only my mind but also my will. It is revealed to my faith that God the Holy Spirit indwells me. But what kind of emotion does that discovery create? Does it gladden or sadden? Is it a welcome discovery? Does it affect me in the same way as if I had suddenly hit upon a fortune? Do I count Him Friend or otherwise? What will my will do? I have obviously reached a crisis.

Just here will be tested the reality or otherwise of what I have called my regeneration. If I am genuinely a child of God my heart can now do but one thing. It is inconceivable that I will show dislike of the fact of the Divine Presence within. Rather, I will delightedly hail the gracious Guest who has so patiently waited for this moment.

Even more still, He can be Guest no longer; He must become Host. For no place suits God but the head, the centre. He is there not as my Servant but as my Lord. He is come to issue His own commands, not to obey my orders. He is sent as my Saviour's Executive to take in hand my life; to guide, shape, protect, comfort, enable. The discovery of such an one within dictates instant and glad surrender. Authority is resigned into His hands, and the whole burden of life cast upon His shoulders. In the Holy Spirit I have found, and found to my unspeakable joy, the One Who alone is equal to the life of the cross and of the glory.

Thus, I really "*receive* the holy Ghost." Within me before, He is not within with my full knowledge and consent. I own Him Lord, I throw open to Him every part of my being and life. At His girdle I hang the key of every room where, until now, He was Prisoner rather

than valued Host. Ashamed of my past ignorance and neglect of His presence, I now acknowledge not only His presence but His right, and in His blessed communion I enter upon newness of life, life in which it will be " no longer I but Christ liveth in me."

LIFE—THE GOAL

"Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

MATT. VII. 13, 14.

THIS verse has often served as a text for an evangelistic address; an address, that is, having the unconverted in view and calculated to stir to a decision to accept Christ. Such use of the verse may, or may not, be legitimate. In any case application should wait upon interpretation, and a correct interpretation certainly reveals that the first application of these words is not to the unconverted.

They form part of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. This Sermon, as Matthew's introductory words plainly show, was spoken, not to the multitude but to the disciples apart. Seeing the multitudes gather, to avoid them the Master takes His disciples to a mountain retreat, and when He was set "He opened His mouth and taught *them*." Doubtless, in their usual

eagerness the multitudes, ere He had finished His teaching, had discovered the retreat, overheard and were astonished at what was said.

This fact concerning those designed to hear this Sermon is one which we dare not neglect. It is a vital part of the key to its right understanding. Our Lord is speaking to His own disciples; to the converted, and among His other words on that occasion, He speaks those of our text. "Enter ye in at the strait gate"; etc. Whatever the anticipated difficulties in the text's interpretation from this standpoint, let them not deter us from the frank admission that this, and no other, is the standpoint from which it should be considered. True exposition is never intimidated into choosing the line of least resistance.

Whatever therefore may happen we here at the outset definitely and frankly face the fact that in using these solemn words the Lord had turned away from the common multitudes and was looking into the eyes of the select few of His disciples.

That fact acknowledged we are immediately challenged to explain how could our Lord use words contained in the text if they were spoken exclusively to His followers. He is pointing the gate leading to life and urging to enter it.

What need was there of doing so since they were already His converted ones and had already entered that gate to possess life? Moreover He warns His hearers of the possibility of their landing in "destruction," and surely it is not sound doctrine to suppose that those whom the Saviour has saved are any longer in danger of hell. Doubtless those difficulties are real enough to many, but they exist, we believe, from a superficial reading of the words. Let me say most heartily that I believe that every believer in Christ is already in possession of life eternal, and that the Saviour Who plucks a soul from hell will never permit that soul to be plucked out of His mighty hand. At the same time the words of my text are believed to be applicable to such as believe and are eternally saved, and to contain teaching of vital moment to them.

I

First, let us attend to what is perhaps the greatest of the difficulties of the text, that involved in the word, "destruction" and let it be said at once that it is not likely that, in using it, our Lord was thinking of hell at all. That we should think is but a token of the confusion resulting from haphazard ways of reading God's

Word. In this Book words are "inspired" and that must mean that they are carefully selected, have distinctive, well-defined content, and are used consistently.

This word "destruction" will serve as a good example of these features. It has already been asserted that it does not signify that eternal perdition which is hell. Doubtless, hell is a truth of Scripture. He Who knew taught that there is such a state and place; and it is not, as some would have us believe, a way of glorifying God's love to deny or doubt what our Lord taught on this point. At the same time the perdition of the unbelieving must not be imagined where it is not.

But what, we may impatiently ask, is "destruction" here, if it is not hell? A systematic, exhaustive reply is, of course, just now impossible. A suggestion is all that can be attempted. A valuable clue may be found in familiar words in Psalm ciii. 4, that verse and its context we read, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." There is the word, and in that last sentence is the idea we are seeking. Here is a number of redemptive experiences, and in graded order: first,

pardon; second, healing; and, third, the life redeemed from "destruction." Evidently pardon does not exhaust redemption; nor healing added to it. There is still something more; the life redeemed from destruction. Pardon saves the *soul*, but, there is the life; does not that need saving also? Is the thought strange to us that the soul may be saved but the life destroyed?

That thought is not strange to Scripture. Both in its story and teaching it is pressed upon our attention. For clear teaching on the subject we may turn to a passage in 1 Corinthians. There, in Chapter iii, in a passage of exceptional solemnity (10–15) Paul warns Gospel preachers, doubtless, with specific cases in his mind as he wrote. His own apostolic work had been done in Corinth. In his preaching the Gospel there, as it were on virgin soil, he had proceeded as would a wise master-builder. He had laid well the foundation, even Jesus Christ. After his departure other preachers had been there, notably the learned, eloquent Alexandrian Apollos. Reports of their preaching and its effects had reached him, and in his concern for the preachers and their contributions to the building whose foundation he had laid, he sounds forth the warning, "Let every man take

heed how he buildeth thereupon." Upon his apostolic foundation a preacher may build, either "gold, silver, precious stones," or "wood, hay, stubble." The work for the time being may appear proper and commendable But a thorough and ruthless test is ahead: "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day will declare it." The test will be of the severest; satisfactory because merciless—"the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Then appearances will no longer mislead. Pretentious veneers will ignominiously melt away; gold, silver, precious stones will survive and their honest intrinsic value will be vindicated, but wood, hay, stubble—fuel of fire—will soon be nothing but ash. The builder of the gold, silver, precious stones will "receive a reward"; the builder of wood, hay, stubble will "suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Such words should need no comment. Their meaning is transparently plain. Here Christian workers come to judgment, the judgment, mark, not of themselves personally, but of their work. The end of the judgment is not to settle their destiny; that is, whether they themselves are saved or not, but rather to determine the quality of their work, and whether it deserves a reward.

Salvation is not a reward, but a gift. But, the gift accepted, the possibility of the reward opens up before. Faith accepts the Gift; work wins the reward: not the amount of work but its quality in "of what sort it is." And when the work is condemned as shoddy, the saved condition of the worker himself is not affected: "He himself shall be saved: yet so as by fire."

Here then appears the solemn possibility that while the soul is saved, the work, or life may be lost. Lot may escape the doom of the Sodomites, but in his escape he is stripped of all, all that he lived for perishes in the fire.

II

Another passage illustrating the same solemn truth is that in the chapter of our text. The teaching contains phrases and statements of considerable difficulty, but the message of the whole is clear enough. Again it is "that day." The workers are all there and all approach the throne with deference, saying, "Lord, Lord." But, anticipates the Judge, "not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven." That glorious reward—a share with Him in His throne, for that surely is what entering into the kingdom of heaven means—is

reserved for the one described as "he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Others, falsely confident, will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in Thy Name done many wonderful works?" And then comes the stunning reply that withers up their false hopes. They were Christian workers; they by lip at least, acknowledged Christ as Lord; they had really done what they boasted in: prophesied, or preached, cast out demons, done many wonderful works, and all this "in the Name of Christ." They had served diligently; apparently successfully and acceptably, and yet there was lacking that something that meant the Master's approval. And so life crowded with event and not lacking in service ends dismally, even tragically. The whole activity has led to nothing but what can truly be called "destruction."

Can anything be more arresting, more intensely solemn? Christians, Christian workers too, after a life of strenuous service awakened, when too late, to the utter futility of it all. Much building on the foundation to the shame and irretrievable loss of the builders proved to be shoddy; nothing reared worthy of survival; the material used being utterly valueless from the point of view of the Divine purpose, and, though in

appearance Christian, the work regarded by the unerring judgment of Christ as nothing but that of "workers of iniquity." Does not all this stun with its pitiless sentence? It is indeed a revelation that while the Judge can have mercy on the persons of His servants, He can and will have none on their work. The person saved, yet so as by the very fire that destroys his work!

Recovering somewhat from the shock of such a light, we ask (unless we still think that there must be a way out of Divine justice) how can such a tragedy be avoided, and what are the grounds of the Master's decisions? What is it that makes the service of one worker to be gold, silver, precious stones, and that of the other but wood, hay, stubble? Why are some who did such wonderful works in the Lord's name revealed at last as but "workers of iniquity?" There is a clue to the answer, albeit it seems given more clearly in the chapter of our text than in 1 Corinthians iii. Put together two phrases, and we have it. The phrases are these: "He that doeth the will of my Father" and "Ye that work iniquity," or lawlessness. "Ye that work iniquity" are those who had just recounted their prophesyings, exorcism of demons, and wonderful works numerous and

various, and all done in the Name: Every deed done was in itself, as well as in its effect, good. And still "iniquity," lawlessness. Do we still, in unbelief ask how can this be so? Do we presumptuously insist that the Lord should judge according to our standards? When shall we learn that to do what is good in itself, and in its effect, is not necessarily goodness in the doer? If often is indeed, as that day will show, the veriest iniquity. There is something greater than "doing good"; greater than prophesying or casting out demons, or doing wonderful works; it is "doing the will of my Father which is in heaven." Obviously these busy, popular workers had performed all their service without any reference whatever to the will of the Father. They had exercised powers with which they were endued, and done the thing next to hand. There had been no acknowledgment of any plan God might have had for their lives. There had been little prayer and no real fellowship with Christ. He and they, in this respect, were such utter strangers, that He truly says, "I never knew you." They had taken their lives into their own hands: followed their own fleshly promptings and natural wisdom. Acting under Divine command was something they never knew; that intimacy with Christ which means abiding in

Him never became a thing of their experience; they had "works" but no "fruit"; they acted without His commission and therefore without His Spirit. Hence, "lawlessness" is no wrong description of their work, for while they did many good works they never did the will of God. It is notoriously easier to "do good" than to be a servant. To live and not be interfered with, to do good and have one's own way is, to the natural in us, the essential condition of happiness. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh (and who doubts that Christians and Christian workers may be among them) cannot please God." Obedience to His will is with Him the primary claim, and "lawlessness" even under the guise of "Christian work," is abomination.

More hiddenly perhaps, the same thought is suggested in the context of the passage in 1 Corinthians iii. The solemn warning of that passage to which attention has already been directed, is introduced by these words: "We are labourers together with God, ye are God's husbandry, God's building" (1 Cor. iii. 9). Mark it, "God's husbandry"; "God's building"; not ours but God's: and "we are labourers

together with God." Eloquent little preposition—"with." Why all the talk about "work for God?" Why are we so unfamiliar with the thought of work *with* God? The two thoughts may be as far apart as the poles. Working *for* God proves a deadly snare unless it is enswathed in the thought of "working *with* God." What a wondrously eloquent expression it is; "Labourers together *with* God." In it God is recognised as the supreme Worker Who deigns to take up such as we into fellowship with Himself, so that each diffidently borrowing our Lord's words, says, "My Father worketh and I work." Such work is in His fellowship and under His command. It is the result of waiting upon Him and of a surrender as His will becomes known. It is indeed, in a most real sense, not our working at all but His working in and through us. Here then is the gold, silver, precious stones. The contribution of one effort to God's building, His Holy Temple, is according to His pattern, done by Himself and approved of the searching fire. This and this alone is entering in at the strait gate and walking the narrow way, that leadeth to life. Strait indeed is such a gate and narrow indeed is such a way to the flesh in us that hates being crushed and controlled and robbed of its

own initiative. It is willing to concede anything providing it is allowed to survive and shine. It only kicks at obedience to God. It is ready to become moral, religious, or philanthropic; it willingly becomes preacher, Christian worker, miraculous healer of sick and exorciser of demons, but one thing it will not submit to—the will of God. It is seen strutting pompously along the broad way but the narrow way knows it not. It will build upon the one foundation busily and seemingly well, but its contribution is but wood, hay, stubble; it knows not the will and Spirit of God from whence are quarried the gold, silver, precious stones.

Here then, thou Christian worker, is the subtle enemy to be watched and hated. It cannot destroy thy soul, but it will, if allowed, bring thy life to destruction. It will deceive thee into regarding thyself as capable and effective in the work of God, to the utter shame at the last of hearing all that thou hast done branded as iniquity. The wide gate and the broad way, fellow-Christian, are thy dangers, not those of the unconverted. Eschew them; enter the strait gate where the flesh is crucified and the Lord's yoke accepted. Never forget that in choosing "ways" you choose their ends. If you do not fear "destruction" then you will not be

deterred from entering the wide gate and the broad way that leadeth thereto, and you will find also the majority of your fellow-Christians, for did not our Lord say, "many (i.e. of His own disciples) there be which go in thereat." But if you are determined upon life—life not in undeveloped degree but in its fullest, at its highest, and life crowded—you will not be discouraged by the few there be that find it, but having chosen your road you have chosen the gate and the way, for that life is at the end of none but the gate that is strait and the way that is narrow. It was the way our Lord Himself trod and as you tread it too you will find that though narrow it has room for two—yourself and your Master. And with Him there the gate is no longer strait nor the way narrow; you will prove that He has indeed led you into a wide place. In the "flesh" alone is the gate strait and the way narrow; to the broken heart the gate is none other than the gate of heaven, and the way the very house of God.

THE LIFE POWER

"No man can . . . but by the Holy Ghost."
1 Cor. xii. 3.

MOST will at once have detected that in the reading of the text some words have been omitted. The statement as Paul wrote it reads, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." In abbreviating the statement for the purposes of a text nothing has really been taken away from it. In the statement as it stands in the verse there is the enunciation of a principle together with one possible application of that principle. The text as it has been read contains the principle while leaving out the application. There are more applications than this one, and it is hoped to refer to them.

I

But, first, let us pay heed to the principle: "No man can . . . but by the Holy Ghost."

"No man can"—what? Anything and everything pertaining to Christian living and serving. The Holy Ghost is indispensable if a believer is to do anything in a really Christian way and with Christian effect.

This simply means that the really Christian life is in one sense, not human at all, but supernatural and Divine. The vessel, so to speak, is human, but the initiative, the design, the resource, is Divine. The Lord warned His disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." And "nothing" must not be interpreted as if it meant "not much," for such manipulation of the word would turn "nothing" into "something." Our Lord deliberately said "nothing" and meant it literally. To possess the notion, then, that while we cannot do all we can do a deal, is to contradict our Lord in a definite statement of His.

That the early disciples agreed literally with His judgment is illustrated by Paul's famous words, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20), and by his equally strong and familiar statement, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Such statements have been taken to indicate something which none but the most advanced of Christians could use, while, in reality they

merely indicate the basic, normal principle of every life that is truly Christian. Paul declares that his life as a Christian was a supernatural one, that the One who actually lived it was Christ and not Paul.

Why any one who has any knowledge of the New Testament, or any experience of God's grace in Christ should resent such statements is incomprehensible. A Christian is, in his origin as such, supernatural. He is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*" (John i. 13). "If any man be in Christ he is a *new creature*" (2 Cor. v. 17). His birth is miraculous, for he is born again of the Spirit (John iii. 5). Whoever is a "self-made man" it is not the Christian. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," a product as anti-Christian as is conceivable. "A new creature"—no creature is its own creator; "Born again"—no child is its own father. Those metaphors imply what is explicitly taught—that in man being a Christian is something miraculous. He is the product of no evolution, or heredity, or culture or of any process whatever but of an act which is "out and out Divine."

That being so it should not be difficult to consent to the fact that a Christian's life is like himself, something supernatural. There is no

need of fear in the full acceptance of this. There is no de-humanising of man, as some seem to anticipate, in such a condition. The one who lives this supernatural life is not reduced to a mere automaton. Paul could truly say "I live" although he immediately adds "yet not I but Christ liveth in me." No man is such a man, so real a man, man in such measure, as he in whom life is Christian, and therefore supernatural. Indeed, apart from the miracle of the Divine indwelling and activity man can bid farewell to the possibility of ever living a truly human life. The human life is not such a life as a sinner lives; it is rather the life of perfection, and such a life is only possible supernaturally. "No man can . . . but by the Holy Ghost."

Here then is a test which should be self-applied by all who call themselves Christians. It is the only sure way of ascertaining whether the lives we are living are Christian in the true sense. The real Christian life is a supernatural one. Is ours? In other words, is all we do easily accounted for on a natural basis? Are we doing the impossible or merely the possible? Is there any need to bring in any factors into the account of our life and service other than our natural gifts and the advantages of our environment? In short, is it necessary to bring in God

to explain our life? It is important that there should be no misunderstanding or equivocation here. It is so easy for the flesh in us to own, so to speak, to cover, and piously acknowledge that "God, of course, is in everything, and that whatever we do cannot act without the strength God gives." This is true enough, and sounds well, and yet such language but betrays its users. What is meant here by a supernatural life is not the kind of life generally lived by all men who without exception "live and move and have their being in God"; it is rather that abnormal, miraculous life which marks out the exceptions among men; those who are conscious of the indwelling of Christ, who seek to know His will, whether it be to do or to undo, and who in the doing of that will, scale precipices, find a way through seas and rivers, and overcome even "the roaring, devouring lion" himself. There are on earth those who live such a life. Alas, that their number is so few.

In order to such a life, it is clear that there must come as a beginning a sense of nothingness. We must find and give place to God. As it is He is too often excluded. The need of Him is so vaguely realised. We are so strong and capable, so knowing and wise; there is much, we think, we are still able to do, and, if we do

our best God will do the rest. "God helps those who help themselves." Such are the aphorisms on which we trade, and such a wrong general conception of what Christian living is. Alas, such conceptions are utterly foreign to the Christian ethic. Christ can profit nothing to such as think and act on such lines. Our sanctification is not the joint-produce of Christ and the flesh. We must make definite choice as between law and grace. Adulteration of grace by the law paralyses grace in its redemptive activities. It is to "the *faint* He giveth power, and to them that have no *might* He increaseth strength" (Isa. xl. 29). God's "power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 8). It is "in the wilderness that waters break out, and streams in the desert" (Isa. v. 6). It is the lame that leaps as an hart, and it is the tongue of the dumb that sings. Like the Lord Himself the Christian life grows "as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. l. 2), a metaphor which, like the others, implies that the ground itself cannot account for the growth; it is a miracle. The Christian life must be all of God or not of God at all. Are we willing for the blotting out of self which this implies? "Christ liveth in me," says Paul, but he could never have said as much had he not been able first to say, "I am crucified with

Christ." His attempts at living had come to nothing; he therefore concludes and decides that he had better retire from the effort and let Another succeed where he had failed. Do we glory in our powers? We shall begin to live as Christians should when we say with all our illumined hearts, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. xii. 9). "Blessed are the poor in spirit"—who know their nothingness and gladly recognise their extremity as God's opportunity. The place of death is the place of life. Sin is the exclusion of God, the Christian life is the exclusion of self. All things in it have become new, and *all* things are of God. We only begin to live when Christ liveth in us. "No man can . . . but by the Holy Ghost."

II

A deep conviction of this truth is of vital moment to us all. In order to get that deep conviction let us look at a few applications of it, including that in the verse of our text. We might think of it in relation to Prayer, Witness and Victory over Sin. Here are three things that represent a large part of the territory of Christian life and service.

Think, first of all, of Prayer. What an element in Christian living this is. Indeed it is safe to say that to learn to pray is to master the chief lesson in a believer's life. And yet how prayerless we are. We live so poorly because we pray poorly. Still, all of us would pray more and better did we but know how. How often, convicted of and restive under our sad failure, we have resolved to remedy matters. And, in pursuance of that resolve we have been seen seeking a quiet place where at least an hour every day shall be spent alone with God; an hour in which to breathe in, and to feed on, the life of God in His fellowship; an hour in which to learn more of His will and to cast upon Him all our burdens. The resolve is sincere enough as, with the Divine Book laid open before us, we kneel in that quiet place apart. A full hour is to be spent there. We are determined to cure our life of its guilty prayerlessness.

But alas, resolves are more easily made than kept. Long before the hour is reached that quiet place has been vacated. It is not that we intended it, but, frankly, we found that we had undertaken a task beyond us. A whole hour's prayer-communion with God! It seemed easy, it proved difficult; even impossible.

Who are the people who talk of praying as

easy? Prayer, doubtless, is "the Christian's vital breath" but that must not lead to the notion that prayer is as easy as breathing. Those who pray are under no delusion in the matter. Praying is difficult for more reasons than one. It, first of all, is commerce with the invisible. Our physical senses are strong and well trained and to realise the material world requires no effort on our part. But to those whose spiritual birth is recent, or those who are old believers but have neglected the exercise of their spiritual faculties, consciousness of the reality of what is invisible does not come easily. In the struggle to believe the point of exhaustion is often not far away. Could God be seen or felt how much of the problem, we think, would be gone.

Then praying is difficult because, whatever our experience or degree of spiritual culture, Satan bends every power of his to make it difficult. It is perhaps strange but nevertheless most true that nowhere is he more busy than when we are at the throne of grace. If one doubts the personality and power of Satan let him try to pray, and it can safely be promised that his doubts will quickly vanish. The prayer-chamber is his most important battle-field. He can tolerate anything more easily than a child of God praying. The man who goes apart for an hour's quiet

time with God may expect Satan's worst. And his worst is so bad that it makes praying impossible. It is useless our putting our puny strength against such an enemy. The position is such that "no man can . . . but by the Holy Ghost." If we need to be Spirit-energised for anything it is for praying.

III

Then, let us think of witnessing for Christ. Here is a natural expression of the Christian life. Every believer is constituted a witness to His Saviour. And there is no truly Christian heart but instinctively realises that it should tell out what grace has wrought within, so that He Who wrought it might be glorified.

But, testify? How few Christians attempt it! It is so easy to pass by on the other side when a few zealous ones are holding forth at the street corner. Why is it we stand aside? Why are our voices silent when we owe the Lord everything? Subsequent to that first confession of our Lord has there been anything, either publicly or privately, that could honestly be called a confession or a testimony? What about the limited circle of our relatives and friends; have they ever heard our lips confess Christ? Do we ever name Him? For His Name is our confession.

To let our lips say, the Lord Jesus Christ, is to confess Him. Have children, or parents, wife or husband, friends or playmates, colleagues in business or school, ever heard that name on our lips? Yes, doubtless, we sometimes in a distant kind of way speak of God, of the Creator, of the Ruler of the universe, etc., but the Christian confession is to name Jesus Christ, the Lord. A pagan may speak in general terms of the Deity; a Christian unashamedly should name his Saviour. Why do we not do so? Is Satan against us here also? Assuredly. His hatred is concentrated on the Person of Christ. He has no great objection to religion, Godliness, humanitarianism, and the like, so long as the Name that is above every name is not connected therewith. He says nothing against such healings as that of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful, but such healings must not be done in the name of Jesus. And is it not notorious to-day that most religious and philanthropic work is done with hardly a mention of the name of Christ. That very fact indicates the extent of the enemy's de-Christianising of "Christian" churches and nations. Much is said about the supposed advance of civilisation in every way. Will any one inform us who creates the spiritual atmosphere that effectively slays testimony to Christ on Christian

lips? Why do we find it so difficult to name our Lord? Is it not the prevalent sentiment concerning such as do name Him? A smile, half of scorn and half of pity covers faces when any one has boldness to confess Christ. That sentiment and that smile are the creations of God's enemy and ours. You may speak endearingly of wife, mother, husband, father, child and friend, but speak the Name of God's Son and you are guilty of an offence. Is the world in which such a thing is true God's world? No wonder we are dumb. Dumb concerning the Crucified Lord we ever shall be if we know not the power of the Holy Spirit, for "no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Filling us must be He that is greater than he that is in the world if we are to raise our voices in praiseful testimony to the Exalted One of God.

IV

Lastly, there is the sinfulness that still clings to us. Our hearts are new, but there is the consciousness that old disposition and habits still cling to us. Instinctively we acknowledge that sin has no right to a place in a Christian's life. The Lord's call is to holiness, as we know full well. We have seen the vision of what we

should be, and in our hearts are deep yearnings after purity and Christlikeness; but, somehow, do what we will, sin is there and seems to compel our submission. Failure after failure to eliminate it tends to the comfort of the false notion that this side of heaven there is no way of victory. Then again, bursts forth the light of the life within us and conscience re-awakens. And thus the life which should be glad is full of sad discontent.

Sometimes we are conscious of some special sin that harasses. It is the Goliath among the enemies in our fallen nature. Whenever it comes forth with its blasphemous challenge it is to humiliate us. It is not that we do not endeavour not to commit that sin. We have resolved again and again that it must and shall be overcome. Every time it is committed we vow it shall be the last. But our sincerest, strongest resolves crumple up when this sin plays its battering rams against them. What shall we do? Nothing. Unless we are at last convinced that against sin we ourselves are absolutely helpless. If that conviction has not yet come then the Lord must wait until it does come off. There must be the full acknowledgment that here again "No man can . . . but by the Holy Ghost." It will be a glad moment when in the war against

sin we heartily allow that "the battle is the Lord's." Instead of vainly fighting ourselves, let Him.

> "Force me to render up my sword
> And I shall conqueror be."

Sin is stronger than we are, but the Holy Ghost is stronger than sin. Retire from the fight, and let Him triumph where you have been defeated. In all things let Him. Pass from the natural life to the life that is supernatural. Being yourself a Christian, let your life be Christian—let Christ not only be your life, but let Him live in and through you. So shall men see your good works and glorify, not you, but your Father which is in heaven.

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